

# Wind Cave National Park

National Park Service  
Department of the Interior



Long before the arrival of horses to North America, native people hunted bison on foot, stampeding these massive animals over steep cliffs so they would fall to their deaths. At Wind Cave National Park there is evidence of such a buffalo jump on the Sanson Ranch. This method of hunting was dangerous but the rewards of a successful jump were enormous. A single jump could feed, clothe, and shelter the people for a whole year.

Researchers found ancient tools such as a flake knife and scrapers that were used to prepare the bison meat at the Sanson jump. Evidence suggests this jump was used as early as 1000 years ago. There is still more to be learned about the Sanson Buffalo Jump, but one thing is certain: extreme courage, preparation, and cooperation were required to stampede the bison over the edge.



Buffalo jumps became obsolete after the introduction of horses to North America in the 1700s. Horses allowed native people to follow the herds and hunt more efficiently. By the time of westward expansion, the horse people of the plains were in their full glory and buffalo jumps were only stories of the courage and cooperation of their ancestors.